



UNITED NATIONS DECADE ON  
**ECOSYSTEM  
RESTORATION**  
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Presents



**Conversations around sustainability and CSR** Edition 6

Theme: [Introspection](#) | [Resilience](#) | [Sustainability](#)

50 Leaders | 15 Conversations | One Theme | One Purpose

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## Introduction

by **Ranjan Rayna**  
Director & chief strategist, CauseBecause



“...let’s converse, talk to each other, share experiences – ideas, solutions, thoughts – and see how we, the development and sustainability sector stakeholders, can continue to make a difference...”

“...as the exclusive medium for the domain, CauseBecause will continue to bring individuals from the sector together, create platforms for meaningful conversations, ask pertinent questions with regard to the outcomes and the impact of projects where millions of rupees are being invested...”

## A thought

**‘Building communities to strengthen intellectual capacities of sustainability and social sector stakeholders...’**

by **Brig. Rajiv Williams**  
Corporate head, group CSR, Jindal Stainless



### Highlights from the address

Brig. Williams urged corporate groups, non-profits, government representatives and other stakeholders to join hands and work together – especially at common geographies – for a common cause to make a larger, meaningful impact.

**Commitment to the cause:** Quoting from his experience with the Indian Army, Brig. Williams stated that just as the Army is committed to serve the country and plays a significant role in development of the area and welfare of the communities in and around their areas of operation, it is the corporate’s responsibility to ensure welfare of the communities around their areas of

work. The individuals responsible for execution of CSR programmes should be devoted to social and environmental initiatives like a selfless soldier.

**Identify the communities to work with:** First are the ones in the areas of ‘influence’ – those who are directly influenced by your work, your business, your interventions in their political, social, cultural geographies. Second are those who are in the areas of ‘interest’ – issues, thematic areas and causes where the company wishes to make a difference and bring about a change. These areas should be well defined with long-term plans, probable outcomes and goals in sight.

**Strengthen intellectual capacities of sustainability stakeholders:** We need to invest in people, the first P in the triple bottom line of three Ps – people, planet and profits – and build their capacities and capabilities to steer initiatives focused on building a sustainable world... If you wish to have a real connect between the head and the heart, speak the language of the heart...

**Collectivisation of CSR funds for social development:** ...Companies that have to ‘invest’ smaller amounts towards CSR should not think that they cannot make an impact because their mandated investments are small; instead, they should look at partnering with stakeholders for collectivisation and investment of their small social funds in projects that can make a larger ‘collective’ impact.

Case story from Kalinga Nagar, Odisha: How about 30 companies, including some of the well-known corporate names from steel and power sector, coming together and trying to address the fundamental social issues of the communities in a given geography by supplementing and complementing each other's CSR work? While at it, the companies are also addressing the environmental issues of the same geography and working together – sharing knowledge and learnings and forging partnerships...

Watch the video:



### Conversation Round 1

**Subject:** Environmental sustainability in India: How will it be a decade from now?

Can we use the pause that the pandemic brought into our lives for doing different things, or doing things differently? The last two years have brought several lessons for us, if we will see them. One thing is clear – that we have to do more than what we have been doing. Less complacency, more actions, by more and more of us!

#### Points to ponder upon

- ✓ The policies are only going to get stringent from here and unsustainable practices may very well come to be equated with unlawfulness.
- ✓ Some of the largest business conglomerates including the fossil fuel and mining giants have committed to net-zero carbon, water neutrality, zero waste, circular economy... how much of it is possible and how will it be made so?

#### Panellists

- **Dr Sumit Sharma**, programme lead, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- **Vivek Prakash**, vice president, CSR, Jubilant Ingrevia Ltd
- **Prof. PK Biswas**, ex-director, Indian Institute of Forest Management
- **Adwait Joshi**, CEO, Clean Energy Access
- **Brig. Rajiv Williams**, corporate head, CSR, Jindal Stainless Limited

*The conversation in brief*

**Dr Sumit Sharma**

Programme lead, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)



“...as far as mitigation of carbon footprint is concerned, we are moving forward, but not at the pace that is required. The new Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) assessments tell us that we are moving towards something that we really do not want. We have increased the global temperatures by 1.1°C from pre-industrial era, and are about to hit 2°C, and this could become 3°C if we continue to move without serious interventions.

“...India is one of the first countries to have come forward and voluntarily announce its commitment to reduce its carbon intensity, increase clean and green energy usage without impacting the economy, and go carbon-neutral by 2070... though some schools of thought say that we could have been a little more ambitious, I believe that at least a start has been made and the efforts will only double up from here.

“What India promised in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in the Paris Agreement in 2015, we have almost achieved those targets, which apparently were to be achieved in 2030. India is moving on a fine trajectory, the future is promising, and I believe we’ll be able to achieve the neutrality sooner than the committed timelines.”

**Vivek Prakash**

Vice president, CSR, Jubilant Ingrevia Ltd



“...it is the responsibility of all stakeholders to work towards carbon mitigation and also address other environmental issues that we face today. Corporates in this case are the biggest stakeholders with a larger responsibility. Thankfully, in the last decade or so, the narrative of the corporates in India has changed for good, and so have their actions. Today, more and more companies are making transparent disclosures, have focused sustainability reporting frameworks, and are making efforts to cut down their environmental footprint.

“...in our organisation, we have set a target of ‘responsible and inclusive growth 2026’, wherein the most important element that we are focusing on is sustainability and climate change. The idea is to reach carbon neutrality and water positivity. We believe that the sustainability of our business is totally dependent on the sustainability of the planet.

“...with regard to the solutions being implemented by our company, we are investing in multiple innovative solutions, one of them being using farm waste to make energy. The project, being implemented in partnership with a startup, is at a pilot stage and is taking care of about 10 per cent of farm waste of our partner farmers and will gradually scale up and maybe reach 100 per cent.”

**Prof. PK Biswas**

Ex-director, Indian Institute of Forest Management



“The time has come. We have been grappling with the issue of sustainability for a very long time. I have spent nearly three decades at Indian Institute of Forest Management and have groomed thousands of individuals who are sensitive towards the environment and are relentlessly working across significant decision-making bodies – UN agencies, government departments, EHS, sustainability and CSR departments at corporate groups...

“Mahatma Gandhi talked about trusteeship, empowering communities, strengthening India’s 600,000 villages, the grassroots where the actual India lives... and that is where the real challenge lies. The most important component is people. It is important to empower the community, enable them to make decisions and take positive actions...

“...We need to tap into the native wisdom of communities at the grassroots. The indigenous knowledge that our tribal communities possess has to be conserved and made use of. Our young professionals getting management and engineering degrees need to be sensitised about community needs; they need to understand that no environmental initiatives can be successful without participation of the grassroots communities...

“...A lot of thought has gone into creating stringent laws, rules and regulations as far as the environment is concerned, but the execution of the same is where we lack. The aware and conscious citizens of the country should try and make some efforts to ensure that the law that has been made is also implemented effectively.”



**Adwait Joshi**  
CEO, Clean Energy Access



“As we enter the eighth year of the CSR mandate, it’s time for companies to assess if they are following a philanthropic way of doing CSR or a sustainable way of doing the same. For instance, are they continuing to install solar streetlights or distributing solar cookers to the communities, or are they also looking at larger partnerships with grassroots communities, the last-mile social entrepreneurs?”

“Most of the ESG frameworks that the Indian corporate houses have adopted have primarily come from western countries and do not really address the issues of a large and diverse country like India... In order to be able to meet the Scope 3 parameters of ESG standards, we’ll have to engage with external

stakeholders – most importantly, the communities at the grassroots. We should not be forcing solutions upon communities, but instead work along with them to find resolutions to their problems for true sustainable progress.

“...A gigabyte-level change in India can happen when a community using even a few hundred units of power move to clean energy and also become producers of green and clean energy through adoption of innovative technologies and solutions that have been developed by small social entrepreneurs across India.

**Watch the video:**



### Conversation Round 3

The Coffee for Cause community to ponder upon the following thought (through sharing ideas and experiences, exchanging notes and realisations):

**Subject** "I love shopping. I love travelling." Now, tell me how to do these with minimal impact on the environment.

Finding a sustainable or ethical alternative to everything you buy or do is, without doubt, a daunting one. There's the prospect of not being able to buy the brands you're used to and limiting your choices, not to mention having to spend a little more than you would normally.

*Conversation highlights*

This was an open house – rather within and amongst the house conversation wherein the Coffee for Cause community shared what was their bit towards an environment – as an individual as well as that of their organization.

The session was moderated by **Robin Sarkar**, project director, Shiv Nadar Foundation.

[Watch the conversations video:](#)







